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SALT Balance

Staunchest opponents of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty 2 concede the momentum in the ratification debate currently belongs to proponents because of a carefully coordinated strategy calling for attachment of "understandings" to the treaty (AW&ST July 16, p. 24) that give the appearance of toughness. The understandings, which do not change the treaty or require Soviet agreement, are tailored to the concerns of opponents. Opponents hope the momentum will shift when Senate Armed Services hearings begin this week. Skepticism about the treaty is considered greater in the Armed Services Committee than in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where hearings are under way.

Opponents regarded an appearance by former Ambassador W. Averell Harriman last week as a setback. Harriman warned that rejection of SALT 2 could lead to a hardline successor to Soviet Presidium Chairman Leonid I. Brezhnev, while acceptance could strengthen "the more reasonable group" of Soviet political leaders. But Harriman conceded the Soviets have far exceeded the conventional arms buildup needed to protect eastern and western borders from invasion. Harriman supported a contention by Sen. George McGovern (D.-S. D.) that U. S. satellite reconnaissance photos ought to be published in newspapers to show the American public this country's verification capability.